

How Kuibum, Youngpokie, and the Tiger Helped to Evangelize the Village

By
JOHN Z. MOORE
Missionary to Korea

Board of Foreign Missions
of the Methodist Episcopal Church

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HOW KUIBUM, YOUNGPOKIE, AND THE TIGER HELPED TO EVANGELIZE THE VILLAGE

Ko Kuibum was village elder in the town of Syo Cha San (West Mount Sacrifice). His fore-fathers had held the same place for years out-reaching the memory of man, or at least beyond the twelve generations recorded in the book of family history, the most precious possession of a Korean household. Kuibum lived in a large, tile-roofed house which seemed almost a palace to the other villagers who lived in little, mud-walled, thatch-roofed cottages. He ruled as father of them all, yet by no means always as a kind and loving father. To tell the truth, he was really a small Lord of Creation, for he collected all taxes and settled all disputes, or at least carried the village troubles which he could not adjust to the county magistrate. On a few rare occasions he must needs go to the governor at the great walled capital of the Province. Perhaps once or twice in his lifetime he had the peculiar privilege of carrying a dispute to the great Emperor himself, far away in the wonderful mysterious palace at Seoul.

On one of these rare trips to Seoul, Kuibum visited an old friend. This friend seemed to be possessed with a new spirit and was full of strange stories of

a religion which did away with the tens of thousands of spirits of which Kuibum knew and which told men to worship only Hananim (The One Great). Stranger still, it told of a Ku Chu (Lord Saviour) who came to let men know that Hananim was not a great evil Spirit, but a kind Father-God. This same Lord had died for *all* men. Now Kuibum



ON HIS WAY TO "WEST MOUNT SACRIFICE" THE MISSIONARY
STOPS FOR LUNCH

had always known about Hananim; he had feared and perhaps in a way had even worshiped him. Strangest of all, in the midst of millions of spirits and idols, he had never made an image of "The One Great." So it came about that through his friend's influence and guidance Kuibum became a Christian. Business done, he bought the Books

(New Testament and Hymn Book), and returned to his far inland home.

Some time after this the missionary visited "West Mount Sacrifice" at Kuibum's invitation. The village nestles under a mountain on the top of which, in times of drought, sacrifice was made and prayers offered for all that west country—hence the name. The missionary found Kuibum with a following of five men, several boys, and a few women worshiping in a new thatched house which they wished dedicated to the service of "The One Great." They also wanted him to stay a few days and teach them the Holy Writings. This the missionary found possible to do, and be assured no greater joy comes to the missionary's life than that of telling to new ears the story of Jesus and his love. Thus was the church planted in another of the 1,500 villages that have become centers of evangelistic fervor, moral reformation and intellectual enlightenment in the once Hermit Nation. The missionary visited "West Mount Sacrifice" from time to time as the care of his forty churches permitted. The believers increased in knowledge, experience, and numbers until the church that they prayed might be filled was so crowded that at one service there were counted 165 persons seated on a floor eight feet wide and thirty-two feet long. So the building of a new church was proposed, and here begins the most interesting chapter of this story.

Ko Kuibum knew that coöperation could be counted on when he gathered the Christians together at Syo Cha San and laid before them his plans

for the building of a new church. He did not hesitate to ask for great things. "It must be," he said, "the largest building in all the country, large enough for three hundred Christians; it must be built of the best material; and it must have a tile roof."

Where could so much money come from, they wondered in audible surprise. But Kuibum continued: "I will give all the tile and you must do the rest." "But where will you get the tile?" they asked. "There are none to buy, and to build a kiln and burn new ones will take more than your farms are worth." Kuibum's reply was ready. "You know how I have always lived as a lord among you and how I have been proud of my great tile-roofed house while all of you have been content in your thatch-roofed cottages. It is not according to the fitness of things that my house should be better than the Lord's temple, so as there are no other tile to be had I am going to take the tile off my own house, give them to the church, put thatch on my roof and be one among you." Never since the days of Yo and Sun, 2300 B. C. had a "yangban" (aristocrat) been heard to do after this manner, so they said, but belief was imperative, as he at once asked them to help remove the tile from his own house and put up a rice straw thatch instead. Next day they assembled once more. Stirred with a new fire in their hearts they began to pledge for the church. One man who owned a bit of timber on the mountain side, gave it all. Another gave cane stalks for the wattle matting of the walls. A carpenter gave labor. Not only would the women see



WHEN CHRIST COMES TO A VILLAGE THE DEVIL
HOUSE ON THE HILL IS GRADUALLY DESERTED—



—WHILE THE CHURCH OVERFLOWS AT SUNDAY
SERVICES AND ON PRAYER MEETING NIGHTS

to it that the workmen had plenty to eat, but some gave of their scant jewels and a few even handed in their silver wedding rings, thus literally seeking first the Kingdom of God and counting Christ more precious than all else. Youngpokie gave a bright silver yen, and you must know Youngpokie. Here is her story.

One day as the missionary was examining candidates for baptism an old woman was brought in by the native leader. Without formal greetings, her first words were "Tomogee tun hana maamoura Yasu mitsimniata." (Although I am altogether ignorant, with my heart I believe in Jesus.) In Korea candidates are put through a rather severe examination before baptism and she, though so eager, was afraid she might be refused. She wanted to be baptized and get a new name, a name she could take to heaven with her, so she said, and no wonder, for the Korean girls are not given names, but go through life as "somebody's thing," or "some man's wife," or "some boy's mother," as fortune may favor. To have a son is to be blessed indeed, but woe unto the woman without a son; far better had she never been born unless perchance the joy of the Christ has reached her.

Youngpokie never had known the happiness of having a son, and now at seventy, having traveled through the depths, was left to make her way alone. The bright smile that lighted her face—all the brighter for the darkness behind—made the missionary forget his rules about never baptizing any one unless they could repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and could

tell at least the essential facts of Christ's life as recorded in the Gospels. Well he knew that in

the midst of the darkness in which Youngpokie had lived such a smile could come only from a personal knowledge of the old, old story that ever is and ever makes new. Almost before he



YOUNGPOKIE AT HER LOOM—

knew it he had passed her on among those to be baptized. When he told her that her name was to be Youngpokie (Everlasting Blessing) such a light came over her face as would have repaid for all the years of service had the missionary seen no other fruits of toil.

When the new church was to be built, it had been two years since the missionary had seen her, and now with the same old smile, only richer and finer, Youngpokie tells the story of the silver yen. "Though over seventy I worked at my loom, attended market, saved every cash I could until I had a thousand; then I had the cash changed into this bright silver yen (50 cents).



—AND ON HER WAY
TO MARKET

As I have food and clothing I bring this that I may have a part in the building of the new church." Once upon a time a widow of Jerusalem cast her mite, her all, into the treasury, and here in Syo Cha San, nearly two thousand years later, the same beautiful sacrifice is lived out once more.

Even with such heroic giving scarcely enough by half was raised for the church. Nevertheless the gathering of material was begun. Then came the question of a site. And here begins another tale typical of Korean village life. Just back of the village is a beautiful knoll covered with chestnut trees and made sacred by the graves of Kuibum's ancestors. At the foot of the graves is a small field —a gentle slope of green grass. This field was connected with the ancestral burying ground, but belonged to Kuibum. He gave it for the church site. One would think that a man might do as he wished with his own, but many unexpected things happen in the mysterious Orient. Before many days the brothers of Kuibum appeared. They lived in nearby villages, but were not Christians. With great demonstrations of anger and with threats of violence, they declared the church should never be built on that piece of ground. It would pinch the tail of the dragon who had dwelt in that hill for centuries and had guarded the spirits of their ancestors. The dragon would be angry and dire calamity would befall the whole countryside.

Kuibum and the other Christians knew that this was the best place for the church, but saw in the aroused opposition another of the innumerable

conflicts between the forces of darkness and of light. A typical Oriental fight ensued, this consisting for the most part of excited and wordy protestations, along with a bit of hair-pulling. At last the Christians came to the missionary for advice as to whether they should go to law about the matter. Not being well up in dragonology, he was at loss what to say. Delay was inevitable, winter came on, and for the time being the church enterprise was given up. Outward peace, at least, reigned between the Christians and the non-Christians of the Ko clan. Yet the Christians did not give up. While work with their hands was postponed, they worked by prayer and preaching. In this way the real up-building of the church came about. A great revival came to pass and like the seventy of old the disciples of Syo Cha San went out two by two into all surrounding villages, preaching, teaching, and even casting out demons.

One bright spring day they gathered again to consider the building of the church. The revival had done away with the clan bickerings and had added to the church membership. Not only had the revival brought in new men who could help with material and money, but also an American friend of the missionary had sent a gift of money which lifted on the burden. More than that, among the new members were the mother and brothers of Kuibum and they were just as eager as any to build a temple to the true God at the foot of the ancestral graves. The Ko family, one and all, now feared dragons no longer, for they knew the one



WHEN KUIBUM'S MOTHER WAS
CONVERTED, THE KO CLAN
DROPPED THE DISCUSSION
ABOUT THE DRAGON'S TAIL

Great Spirit, the Giver of true gifts, the Preserver of peace and prosperity.

With great labor and sacrifice the church was built. On dedication day it was crowded with eager, sincere, Spirit-filled worshipers, and even though ignorant and uncultured from the point of view of the West, they appreciated to the full the service of dedication and the earnest

words of the Gospel Message. To-day on that beautiful spot, overlooking the surrounding valleys and hills, this church stands a center of life, light, education and organization for the community. It is a light set on a hill that cannot be hid, the only gospel light that will come to this section, as by mutual agreement denominations do not overlap in Korea. Connected with it as an outgrowth of the revival are three chapels which in time will become churches. Surely prayers have been answered and labor rewarded.

So it is that temples to "The One Great" have sprung up all over the land. Of the 20,000 villages in which as yet there are no churches, a Korean said to the

writer: "I firmly believe there is not a town or village in the kingdom but which if into it would go an earnest, sincere Christian, trained in Bible knowledge, be he either American or Korean, he could in six months build a church to the true God." What an opportunity for America to send, that workers may be led, trained, prepared for a harvest not only waiting and over-ripe, but already spoiling before our eyes.

When the church becomes a light in a Korean community, at least three changes take place; there are a moral revolution, an intellectual enlightenment, and a great zeal to do something worth while with one's life. The church under the shadow of Syo Cha Mountain had not been built long before the conviction seized many that they must have a better education than that offered by the old clan schools, which taught nothing but the ancient Confucian classics, dead, and moss-covered with two thousand



THE CHURCH WITH THE TILES THAT CAME FROM KO KUI-BUM'S HOUSE

years of unpracticed preaching. Contrary to a popular idea, never did a people love or respect a scholar as do these Koreans. Be he ever so poor in this world's goods, if a Korean is rich in knowledge of those weird Chinese characters, he has a sure passport to the company of the highest. The "moksa" (missionary), too, was a man of letters with a book, and the Christians preferred to be like him. So on one of the "inoksa's" visits, a leader, who is a poor man, came with a question to ask, just as in the old days they took their questions to the village elder. The leader, who had a son growing up in ignorance, wanted to know if the moksa could not help send his boy to the Christian school at the capital. It would cost \$3.00 per month, no small sum for a Korean farmer, and would the "moksa" give it. The "moksa" thought it a good investment, so he consented and thought the matter closed. The next morning this same leader came once more to the "moksa," saying that after talking it over, the Christians wondered if he would give the money to help start a school in "West Mount Sacrifice," if they could find a teacher and build a schoolhouse. If so, not only the one boy but all their boys could be taught in the Bible and Western learning. Strange, isn't it, that a Korean who knows what the Gospel and education can do for one, should want the same new world for his benighted brethren in bondage?

So it came about that the building of a schoolhouse followed that of the church. Sacrifice was again required and was not wanting. One woman

went without a new winter dress that her boy might have a school; many of the boys and young men sold their knives and cheap watches and other trinkets that they might study arithmetic, geography, history and the Bible. Some men gave up the use of tobacco and gave the price of it for the carpenter's hire. Three men who could do nothing else went off on a tiger hunt, and bagged their game. The proceeds helped mightily, for nothing sells so well in Korea as a tiger—his skin, a sign of royalty, for the magistrate's chair, his flesh to eat, his bones for medicine, his claws for charms, for, strongest of beasts, he thus surely makes men strong. At any rate this tiger helped to build the schoolhouse. At once ten boys were enrolled, and then more, and still more. That schoolhouse is now replaced by a larger, in which about one hundred bright boys gather daily, all eager for the best that Western education and Christianity can do for them. In this one district alone, in less than five years time, that one school has grown to sixty-five and the pupils from ten boys to over two thousand.

Education in Korea has always been a matter of private concern. The crowded Christian schools make it plain that the church has the lead by several years over the many non-Christian schools that are now being started for the teaching of Western knowledge. As the Minister of Education said to the Governor of a Province not long ago as together they came out of a Christian school: "This is the most advanced and best managed school in Korea." Yet in a day of transition, when all things are seek-

ing to become new, such a lead can be kept only by the investment of thousands of dollars for equipment and the securing of many strong men for instructors.

Not only did Christianity in "West Mount Sacrifice" build church and schoolhouse, and fill them, but it also became a transforming power to individuals and to the community. Yun was a drunkard, typical and true to his cups. He attended market, which comes every fifth day in a Korean village, always got drunk, always stirred up a fight, and always went home to drive out his wife whom he cursed for having borne him no son—"only those things"—girls. Yun's girls with their mother had nothing but rags and were always hungry. Yun

went to church to scoff. Prayer was offered for him, a mighty struggle took place, and as of old the demons were cast out. Yun led his wife and his daughters to church. Then came love, peace, prosperity. They now read and study the Books, the girls go to school and are among the brightest. The mother has become a Bible woman, for she knows the depths from which her



YUN'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER

home has been saved and can tell of the triumphs of saving grace. Yun, now a Christian, is still a fighter, but always on the side of right.

Yi, unlike Yun, was a scholar, and always had been. He said each year the inner life seemed to grow smaller, aspirations even were gone, there was nothing to live for. Christ came and since then life has been an expanding vision of better things, a growth that shall be endless, a satisfaction and peace never known before.

The change that came to Yun and Yi, and the others, had its effect upon the town as a whole. One day a noted correspondent of a great London newspaper came to Syo Cha San and stopped over Sunday. He visited the church and at the close of service looked down over the congregation, the men in their long coats, pounded to smoothness and glistening with whiteness, the women in their fresh white dresses and turbans, the boys and girls with bright clean faces. Then he said, "I have always heard the Koreans were such a dirty people. Why, here are the faces of Madonnas and clothes of spotless white." "Yes," was the reply, "but these are not Koreans only, they are Christian Koreans."

Wine shops began to disappear from "West Mount Sacrifice," for the whole church was a temperance organization, it being an unwritten law that no drunkard could have fellowship in church. Whereas once one house in every three had been a wine shop, now these were all gone. Even on market day few drunken men were to be seen and when market day fell on a Sunday, the crowd was so small and trade was so dull that there was serious talk of disbanding for that day this age-long institution. The time for the yearly sacrifice for the

sins of the people came. For centuries this village had sacrificed the blood of a bull, yet now so many had accepted the blood once shed for all, that instead of a bull the few pagans left had to be satisfied with the sacrifice of a rooster.

Such a transformation was indeed a turning of the town upside down. It was not accomplished in a day, nor did it come about without bitter persecution, endured with Christlike patience; impossible difficulties were overcome by faith and sacrifice, and many great and terrible demons were cast out by mighty prayer. Yet the contrast was so great that all agreed with Kuibum when he said, "What glorious days these are to live in; how hard it must have been for our forefathers who knew not 'pok chusenon Yasu' (blessing-giving Jesus)." In place of filth, cleanliness; instead of hopelessness, hope; instead of wasted lives lived in laziness, lives spent in burning zeal about the Master's business.

Jesus being lifted up in a far off Korean village drew men unto himself and the desert was transformed into a garden of the Lord.

The hungry millions wait,
The coming of the light,
That maketh all things new.
Christ also waits,
But men are slow and late;
Have we done all we could?
Have I? have you?

